

Hillandale



Journal of the
City of London
Phonograph and
Gramophone Society

THE HILLANDALE NEWS

December 1986 No. 153

ISSN-0018-1846



Anna Case and Dixie Jubilee Singers, Swanee River (?1926)

THE HILLANDALE NEWS

Official Journal of the City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society
(founded 1919)

EDITOR: Christopher Proudfoot, [REDACTED]

DISTRIBUTION: D.R.Roberts, [REDACTED]

C O N T E N T S - DECEMBER 1986

VITAPHONE AGAIN by Michael Quinn	Page 116
CORRESPONDENCE	121, 138
TINFOIL PHONOGRAPH - a Norwegian view	128
LONDON MEETING (September 1986)	129
RECORD REVIEWS by Frank Andrews and George Frow	132
BENNY GOODMAN AND TEDDY WILSON by John Cavanagh	133
AGM: report of the Society's 1986 Annual General Meeting	135
LONDON MEETINGS, January-March 1985	137
NINON VALLIN by John Cavanagh	138

ILLUSTRATIONS:

To accompany Michael Quinn's article on Vitaphone, we show three Vitaphone stills on the front and back covers, as well as a splendid study by Paul Temple of the President addressing the assembled company at Pyrford in October. Pages 130 and 131 show two Gramophone Co. motor variations, to accompany the centre page spread of the New Cecil Zonophone. Comparing these two motors with that of the Intermediate Monarch on Page 83 (August issue), it is clear that the Company tried just about every possible combination of parts from the three basic motors in use in the 1900 - 1914 period.

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"And then again, Jim, I'm not entirely convinced that the market is yet ready for a three-million-play gramophone needle."

Vitaphone

As an appendix to George Taylor's three articles on Vitaphone (Hillandale 144, 146 and 149) we publish here the following communication from Mr. Michael Quinn of Queensland, Australia.

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

I was recently shown a copy of your excellent magazine and was delighted to read Mr. G.W.Taylor's most informative article on Vitaphone Opera Shorts (April 1986 issue). These films and their elusive disc sound-tracks have been a pet interest of mine for many years.

For quite some time I've been trying to compile a complete list of Vitaphone shorts and their contents; consequently I can add some extra items to Mr. Taylor's already extensive list of the opera films.

In the listing which follows (which also includes several shorts by M.G.M. and Paramount) each film is dated, but this indicates only the date on which the term of copyright began rather than a production date. The number cited with each film is the copyright registration number assigned by the Library of Congress. I have also included some extracts from contemporary reviews of the Vitaphone shorts plus several stills taken during production.

Michael Quinn

VITAPHONE SHORTS

Frances Alda (1883-1952) Soprano

The Star Spangled Banner 9/4/1927 MP 3936

The Last Rose of Summer

The Birth of Morn 30/8/1929 MP 588

Otello - Ave Maria

17/2/1930 MP 1188

The British Film Institute has a viewable copy of the Ave Maria short, while the American Film Institute holds two shorts, one being Ave Maria, the other unidentified.

John Barclay Baritone

Faust - Calf of Gold
plus other unidentified selections 4/4/1927 MP3926

Pagliacci - Prologue
plus other unidentified selections 4/4/1927 MP3931

The A.F.I. has both shorts, minus sound-tracks.

Anna Case (1889 - ?) Soprano

Swanee River 4/4/1927 MP3916
Five Gallons of Gas and no Money to Pay for it
Supported by Roy Smeck and the Dixie Jubilee Singers

La Fiesta 4/4/1927 MP3917
with dance divertissement by The Cansinos and accompanied by the Metropolitan
Opera Chorus with orchestra conducted by Herman Heller.

The A.F.I. holds copies of both shorts.

Guido Ciccolini Tenor

Untitled short 28/9/1929 MP708
(with Eric Zardo)

The A.F.I. copy has no soundtrack.

Giuseppe de Luca (1876-1950) Baritone

Barbiere - Largo al Factotum 6/5/1927 MP3979

Both A.F.I. and B.F.I. hold copies and the B.F.I. print is viewable.

Hope Hampton Soprano

Manon - Act IV 27/5/1929 MP245

The A.F.I. copy has no soundtrack.

Kouns Sisters - Nellie and Sara: Soprano duettists

La Paloma 21/7/1927 MP4130
Swiss Echo Duet

The A.F.I. copy has no soundtrack

Allan Prior Tenor

A Dream 13/9/1927 MP4294
Rigoletto - La Donna e Mobile

Rosa Raisa (1893-1963) Soprano

Goodbye 19/5/28 MP5022
Eili Eili

Plaisir d'Amour 2/6/28 MP5052
La Paloma

Trovatore - Act IV duet with Giacomo Rimini (baritone)
29/6/27 MP4120

The B.F.I. has a viewable print of the Trovatore duet. The A.F.I. has a complete

print of the Trovatore duet also and a print of the Plaisir d'Amour without soundtrack.

Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861-1936) Contralto

By the Waters of Minnetonka
and other songs 2/4/27 MP3903

Danny Boy 4/4/27 MP3927
and other songs

Erlkoenig 18/7/27 MP4163
Trees
Private Dreams

The B.F.I. has a viewable print of the Erlkoenig short, and the A.F.I. has a single untitled short.

John Charles Thomas Baritone

Pagliacci - Prologue
18/4/1927 MP3956

Danny Deever 19/4/1927 MP3964
In the Gloaming

Maytime - Will You Remember (with Vivienne Segal)
19/4/1927 MP3965

The A.F.I. has a complete print of the Danny Deever short and one of the Maytime duet without soundtrack.

Reinald Werrenrath (1876-?) Baritone

On the Road to Mandalay
Duna 12/3/27 MP3831

Long, Long Trail 2/4/27 MP3887

Charles Hackett Tenor

Additional Shorts:

Call of the Nile 11/7/27 MP4158
Sadko - Chanson Hindoue

Who is Sylvia? 11/7/28 MP5140
Serenade (Schubert)

Faust 9/12/29 MP942
(with Chase Boromeo), 2 reels

The A.F.I. has 8 reels of Charles Hackett only the Romeo & Juliet short is identified.

Sources for the foregoing:

Catalog of Copyright Entries - Motion Pictures 1912-1939 (Library of Congress, 1951)

Catalog of Holdings - The American Film Institute Collection and the United Artists Collection at the Library of Congress 1977

Card file entries - British Film Institute.

Selections from New York Times film reviews of Mordaunt Hall

August 7 1926: Review of previous evening's Premiere of the Vitaphone at Warner's Theatre, New York (Martinelli: Pagliacci, Prologue):

The powerful voice of Giovanni Martinelli then came from the screen singing in an entralling fashion 'Vesti la Giubba' from Pagliacci accompanied by the Philharmonic Orchestra. Nothing like it had ever been heard in a motion picture theatre, and the invited gathering burst into applause such as is seldom heard in any place of amusement. The singer's tones appeared to echo in the body of the theatre as they tore from a shadow on the screen - a shadow that appeared earnest and intense in the delivery of Leoncavallo's well-known composition.

(Talley, Marion: Rigoletto, Caro Nome):

The 'Caro Nome' aria from Rigoletto rendered by Marion Talley gave one an excellent idea of the qualities of the singer's voice and also of her acting. As she retreated from the front of the stage her voice became modulated, and then there were times when one heard her as if from a front seat in the Metropolitan Opera.

February 4 1927: Review of the previous evening's showing of John Barrymore's "When a Man Loves", supported by various Vitaphone shorts. (Gigli: Rigoletto, Quartet, with Talley, de Luca, Gordon):

Marion Talley's renditions are as a matter of fact far better than that in which she was heard some months ago at Warner's Theatre. The quartet from Rigoletto with Beniamino Gigli, Marion Talley, Giuseppe de Luca and Jeanne Gordon was effectively presented on the screen and beautifully rendered with a minimum of grating in the tranquil periods.

(Hackett: Rigoletto, arias):

Charles Hackett's singing of 'La Donna e Mobile' from Rigoletto was exceptionally fine; in fact something comparable with Martinelli's Vitaphone rendering of an operatic air at the initial Vitaphone offering. Mr. Hackett's voice is true and clear, and whatever there was in the way of a soft purr during certain interludes, it did not in any way detract from the beauty

of the aria as a whole.

March 15 1928: Review of the previous evening's showing of Dolores Costello in 'Tenderloin', supported by Vitaphone shorts.
(Gigli and de Luca: Pearlfishers, duet):

No better illustration of going from the sublime to the ridiculous could be imagined than that afforded at Warner's Theatre last night through the medium of the Vitaphone. After having listened to the silver tones of Beniamino Gigli and Giuseppe de Luca, one's eardrums were jarred periodically by resounding threats, jeers and protestations in a ruddy melodrama, the first film subject to be presented with any degree of dialogue.

To the Editor

Lewes, Sussex, September 3 1986

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

The letter from Colin Johnson published in the August Hillandale was of great interest to me. I am quite unable to answer his question why such obsolete recordings should have been available as late as 1942; it is a question I have often put to myself.

A curious fact is that of all the catalogues which emanated from Hayes for 1940/41, that for Regal-Zonophone alone omits, in the forewords, any reference to non-electric recordings being identifiable by an asterisk.

I well remember that during the latter part of 1940 and early 1941 my (then) local branch of Marks & Spencer in Gloucester had a very large stock of Regal Zonophone records with titles which were far removed from their normal province, including many 12" items. They were sold at normal list prices (1/6 and 4/- plus purchase tax) and I bought several records, some of which I still possess. All I bought were electrical recordings but it is clear that many acoustics from all periods were still being offered for sale bearing the bright, modern red and gold Regal Zonophone label.

As I write, I have by me, bearing their original maroon Regal and red Zonophone labels, acoustics Regal G 1014 and Zonophone GO 1 and GO 6. The first two mentioned, items by the Silver Stars Band and Madame Violetta with Ernest Pike are listed in the 1940/41 catalogue - why, is a mystery but the last number, "The End of the Road" by Sir Harry Lauder is not. It is all very odd. Vast sections of the Regal-Zonophone catalogue vanished during the early second war years. Can it be that Marks & Spencer bought up these deletions and launched them on an unsuspecting public? Does anyone know?

Alan Sheppard



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Highgate, N.6, August 20 1986

Dear Christopher,

I was walking down City Road, E.C. today and could not help noticing a scene of activity at the Gramophone Company's old headquarters. This building, which was at the centre of their expanding empire for ten years from 1902, has for many years housed a motley collection of offices and employment agencies. Some years ago, the adjacent buildings in the block were demolished, leaving the original 21 City Road as an insular and forlorn reminder from a vanished age. Today, it too is coming down.

Because of the dangerous state of the structure, I was unable to make a close inspection. However, a workman assured me that they had yet to find an Gramo-
phonic relics - no record caches or Melba's contract. A pity!

As I walked on, the last identifiable remnant of a once-thriving machine and record industry in E.C. was vanishing before my eyes. And was that the ghost of Fred Gaisberg I saw at a window?

Yours sincerely, Tom Stephenson

Chichester, Sussex, August 31 1986

Dear Christopher,

I have a 'Celebrity' gramophone and have been unable to find out anything about the company or indeed whether my machine is complete, and wondered if other Hillandale readers might be able to help.

It in a half-round mahogany and ply cabinet 33 inches in diameter and 18in. tall, on four 18-inch tall cabriole legs. The whole flat top hinges at the back, and the turntable is in the right hand area, with record storage to the left.

The motor is Swiss made, carries no other identifying mark except the word 'FINIS' at the outer end of the spring and is almost certainly original. The internal horn is a crude metal cone opening in the floor of the cabinet directly below the tone-arm pedestal.

What I am most puzzled about is the electric 'tone-arm'. It is brown bakelite, with a 'Min - Max' knob on top of the pedestal and an anti-skate adjustment at the rear. At the end is a large magnetic pick-up with a hole and pinch-screw for ordinary steel needles which carries the name 'Harlie' in italics.

When I first bought it I assumed that the electric 'tone-arm' (the wires for which emerge through the horn) was a modification to replace an earlier acoustic tone-arm. However, there are no redundant screw-holes beneath the pedestal, indicating either that that its was an original fitting (in which case perhaps the cabinets had already been assembled before a change from acoustic to electric had been envisaged by the company) or that the replacement pedestal coincidentally fitted in the same position as the original. The former seems improbable, with the horn still in the cabinet, but the latter too is unlikely especially since the screw-holes

match the very small copper screws used to fix the bakelite pedestal. Screws of such a size would be insufficient to secure a heavy metal tone-arm.

Can you tell me anything about the Celebrity, and particularly whether it is meant to be electric or acoustic? If the former, how should I set about extracting music from the two bare-ended wires dangling beneath it? If the latter, has anyone got a spare Celebrity tone-arm?

Yours sincerely, James Bacon

Ever since receiving the above letter, I have been trying to remember the name of the firm which made Celebrity gramophones. I know they were one of the many dealerships which went into the production of an 'own brand' gramophone in the 1920s, and I think they were in London, probably east rather than west, but that is all I can recall. I know, or rather knew, it because I have seen record covers with their name on, mentioning that they were the manufacturers of Celebrity gramophones. If anyone has such a cover, perhaps they could oblige Mr. Bacon and myself by letting me know the name and address of the firm in question.

From examples I have seen, Celebrity gramophones seem mainly to have been circular or, as in this case, semi-circular, with the distinctive downward-facing horn mentioned by Mr. Bacon. Cabinets are rather plywoody, and lacking the 'class' of other circular cabinets such as the Tyrela.

As to the electric pick-up, either of the suggestions made by Mr. Bacon is quite possible, or this could have been fitted by another firm, using unfinished cabinets bought up after the original firm had either gone out of business or given up the sale of these cabinet models. I do not agree that the small screws used for the pick-up arm would be too small for a metal tone-arm; the sort of tone-arms fitted to machines like this, even allowing for the weight of the soundbox, were often lighter than early pick-up arms, and were often fixed with inadequately small woodscrews.

To extract music from those two wires, you simply connect them to the 'Pick-up' terminal of a period radio set.

- Ed.

Other 'WANTS', apart from a Celebrity tone-arm for James Bacon, are the following, sought by that irrepressible septuagenarian, Frank Holland of the Musical Museum in Brentford High Street:

A large horn with a megaphone mouthpiece (Senger's?), so arranged that he can talk to an audience behind him when he is seated at the WurliTzer.

An Epic gramophone (as described in the August Hillandale)

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HONE CO., LONDON, E.C.

Eresfjord, Norway, May 18 1886

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

Recently, in an antique bookshop, I bought a book 'Store Opfindelser', printed in Kristiana (Oslo) in 1881.

Among all the articles about great inventions was one about the phonograph. I have tried to translate from old-fashioned Norwegian, in Gothic script, into English. Perhaps readers of Hillandale will like to see what they thought about the phonograph 105 years ago. .

Sincerely, Rolf Rekdal

(For the sake of clarity Mr. Rekdal's translation has been 're-translated', so that the following is a very free translation of the original. The illustration was taken from a similar book published in this country in 1890, 'The Modern Seven Wonders of the World', by Charles Kent.)

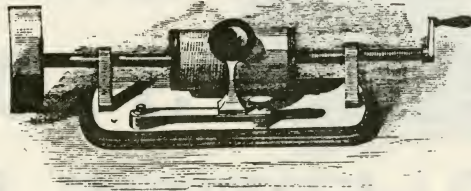
Before the novelty of the telephone had waned, news came from America of an even more amazing instrument called the phonograph, or sound writer. It sounded like the well-known Munzhausen's tale, in which tunes frozen in a horn were later heard again when the horn was brought into a warm room.

A man would speak into the phonograph, it was said, creating a strange-looking indented line in a metal plate. The man's words could be repeated by the machine even after hundreds of years.

The recording could be sent through the post to anyone who possessed a similar instrument, making for a more personal communication than a written letter. A celebrated singer would no longer have to travel round the world; she would just sit in her room and sing into this small machine. Afterwards, her songs could be heard anywhere and audiences would be enthralled by her voice long after she was beneath the soil. There would be no more need for shorthand writers, steel-pen factories or many other existing necessities.

Early rumours about the phonograph were thus rather exaggerated, and perhaps the phonograph never will be able to play such an enormous role, but it was a great invention, and remarkable not least for its sheer simplicity.

(The original text here proceeds to describe the tinfoil phonograph, which is too familiar to most readers to warrant repetition; let a picture suffice.)



When the recording is reproduced, the handle has to be turned at the same speed as when the recording was made. A higher speed raises the pitch of

the voice, while reducing the speed reduces the voice, like a bass. It is difficult to maintain a steady speed by hand, so a clockwork motor has been used.

The tinfoil is soft and weak, so that the indentations soon wear out if a recording is played more than a few times. Copper plates have been produced by a galvano process from tinfoil originals, and it is said that even iron or copper foil has been used with success for recording. This can be achieved by annealing the metal first, and then hardening it after indentation. Steel plates recorded in this way may be used time after time.

LONDON MEETING

SEPTEMBER 30th 1986

For tonight's meeting Len Watts chose "THE SEASONS" as the framework for a programme of Pathé discs. He built on to it a charming sequence of records which symbolised the four seasons of the year. Len pointed out that whatever the size of Pathé discs they all last about two minutes each, and this allowed him to cram nine or ten records into each of the sessions.

If I may make a complaint, it is that geniuses such as Len Watts and Vivaldi, to name but a few, who take as their inspiration the vast unceasing cycle of The Seasons, always begin with Spring. The consequence of this is that we are all sent home on the chill note of winter. My earnest recommendation to any future Seasoners is to get going with Autumn, and excellent season having rich associations with harvest-time and wine-pressing. They may go then go out with a big finish on Summer. But this is to cavil. Len focussed his Winter on the cosiness of Christmas, with the Pathé Military Band playing Margis' 'Christmas Waltz'; the Clarence Quartet performing 'Dad's Christmas with the Boys', and 'A Merry Christmas' from George Formby the Elder.

A further celebratory aspect to the evening came from the fact that it is just twenty-one years since Len Watts journeyed from Twickenham to the Horse & Groom in Shoreditch to attend his first meeting of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society. It must have been a good meeting, for Len decided to enlist, and has remained a member ever since. He has presented a programme of his beloved Pathé discs during nineteen of those twenty-one years, tonight being the nineteenth. I look forward to the twentieth.

A.O.Leon-Hall

** ** *
A H A P P Y C H R I S T M A S A N D A P R O S P E R O U S N E W
N E W Y E A R

to all Members of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

from the Officers and Committee
** ** *
** ** **

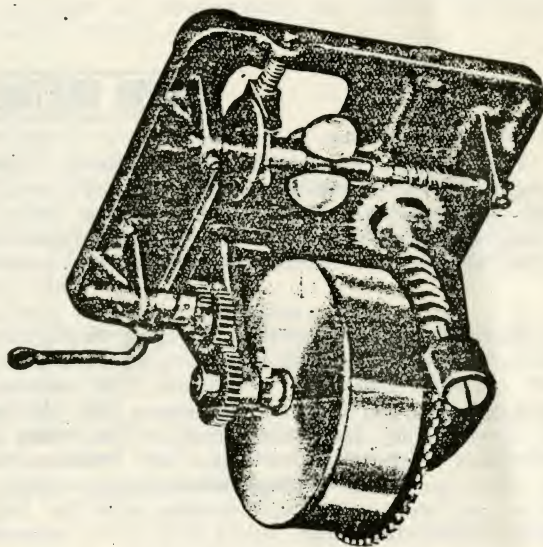
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WITH WHICH THE
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And compare it with the Mechanism
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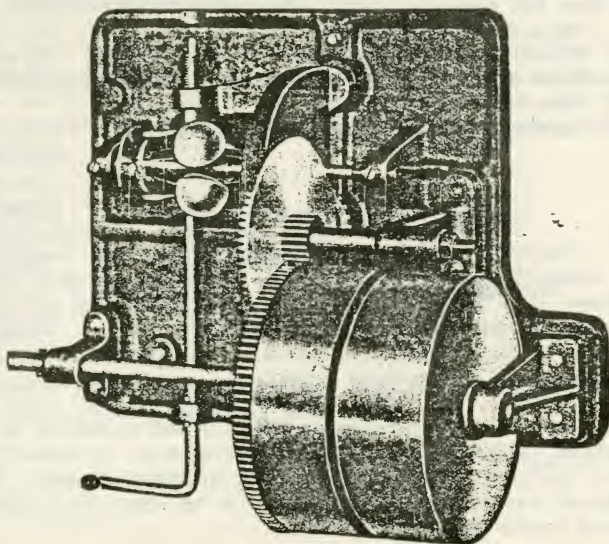
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Mechanism of any other
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Assembled.



Powerful Double-Spring Motor—Perfect Regulation—Silent Running.

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Reviews

THE BAND OF THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS

This is the fourth in the "Band International Series", of which the first three have been reviewed in previous issues of this journal. The recordings on No. 4 were all taken between July 1928 and February 1935, and all but one were conducted by Captain J.Causley Windram. They were originally issued on 'B' and 'C' plum label HMV records, the Band being exclusive to the Gramophone Company at the time. The information on the band, the regiment and the music which is given on the back of the sleeve shows that some competent research has been undertaken to provide a most informative cover.

Titles are listed with composer/arranger, original issue number and date, deletion date and recording date. The pieces are as follows:

Punjaub March (B 4412)	On the March, Selection (B8187)
Mikado Selection (C 2602)	Parade of the Puppets (B4073)
Wood Nymphs (B3951) (Cond. Capt. R.G.Evans)	Wilfred Sanderson's Songs, Sel'n. (C2296)
Americana Suite (C2335)	
Marche Heroique de Szabady (C2754)	Samum (B4094)
	Soloist's Delight (C2754)
	Turkish Patrol (B8095)
	Light of Foot, March (B8253)

Comparing some of the originals with the transfers, using my Quad amplifiers and Leak Sandwich loudspeakers, I can report that there is very little difference between the 78 and l.p. versions. There is none of that dreadful 'tarting up' that is often found with transfers, with the use of 'presence' and echo chambers and the like. I actually have a transfer from acoustic recordings which have been turned into simulated stereophonic recordings!

Lloyd Stickells was responsible for the transfers, as for the others in the series. Needless to say he had superb performances to transcribe, and the 1930s recordings could hardly be bettered. The programme is quite interesting, and is not overburdened with march sequences. Put up your deck-chair, close your eyes and enjoy a good hour's bandstand concert.

The record is IMMS 104, and is monaural.
It is available from V.Elstow, The International Military Band Society, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Price £5.95 post paid.

Frank Andrews

SPA MUSIC
The Bath Pump Room Trio

This record is one of a pair produced recently by the Bath Pump Room Trio in

the cause of light and salon music.

There is nothing so age-revealing as talking about light music because it is something that is heard and found today almost solely on pre-war 78s. In those times the Grand Hotels and their Palm Courts were just too grand for the average family, but plenty of light music could be heard at the Lyons Corner Houses or in the restaurants of provincial stores such as Bobbys, but like the cinema orchestras (and organs) and proper-size theatre pit orchestras, these are now only memories in the minds of those who are getting on a bit.

In spite of attempts by the B.B.C. to run a Palm Court programme week, this now seems to have ceased for good, and owing to costs nearly all the seaside summer season orchestras have given way to the ubiquitous electric organ. Fortunately the Pump Room at Bath is maintaining its three-centuries' reputation for providing live music for those taking afternoon tea. In earlier days, of course, people just took the spa waters and came to be seen, and the various generations of visitors are here represented by the styles of music on the record. Considering that the Trio must play some of this almost daily, all items are put over with freshness and spontaneity, but then the members are highly professional.

All members of this Society drag a foot in the past or they wouldn't be in it, and this record evokes pleasant memories of days of innocence; only the sounds of crockery and conversation are missing, but a visit to the Pump room will bring that back if you must have it all. In the meantime listen to the record, which is recommended without reservation.

The programme is as follows:

Gold and Silver Waltz (Lehar)	By the Sleepy Lagoon (Coates)
Meditation from Thais (Massenet)	Tik Tak Polka (Strauss)
Vanity Fair (Anthony Collins)	Minuet in A (Boccherini)
Piano Trio No. 28, 1st Movt. (Haydn)	South Pacific Selection (Rodgers)
Send in the Clowns (Sondheim)	Serenade No. 1 (Heykens)
Country Gardens (Grainger)	Can Can (Offenbach)

Available in l.p. or cassette form, price £6.95 post paid from A.Hinton, [REDACTED]

George Frow

BENNY GOODMAN AND TEDDY WILSON

A fair number of pieces which I have written for Hillandale have taken the form of obituaries and if some readers find the prospect of continually reading about deceased artists distasteful, then I apologise. No apologies, however, for the subject of this article: two of the more interesting figures in twentieth-century popular music, Benny Goodman and Teddy Wilson. Goodman died in June of this year, shortly after his 77th birthday, and Wilson was lost to us only a few weeks later. Thus it is interesting to assess them together now, for they were closely

associated for many years.

Benjamin David Goodman (born May 1909 in Chicago, Illinois) made his first public appearance imitating Ted Lewis in a talent contest when he was twelve. He won the contest and, around a year later, had his first engagements as a professional musician. After playing in various bands, he joined Ben Pollack's orchestra in 1925. Benny stayed with that band until 1928, joined Red Nichols in 1929 and - perhaps his classic recordings from those early days - played on the Eddie Lang/Joe Venuti sessions of 1931.

Goodman's own first band was formed to play in Billy Rose's music hall in New York. This was in October 1934 and from that time he became known as a seminal figure in the development of the new "swing" music. His historic 1938 Carnegie Hall concert was a milestone of its genre, but Benny also played that venue with forces other than his famous big band. Not only did he excel in the performance of classical concerti by Weber and Mozart; he also commissioned works by contemporary composers such as Bartok, Copland and Hindemith.

Several pages could be filled with further details of his long career on the concert platform and in the recording studio. B.G. undoubtedly made a great contribution within a wide field of music but some of his finest jazz records were made in the company of Theodore "Teddy" Wilson (born in Austin, Texas, 1912).

Although Goodman came from a musical family, of the two, Wilson had a stronger background of formal training. In fact he obtained a degree in the subject at Talladega College, Alabama. Between 1929 (when he first played professionally) and 1935, he played piano in bands led by Louis Armstrong, Benny Carter, Jimmy Noone, Erskine Tate and others. After that period he began recording with Benny Goodman, joining B.G.'s band in 1936. Goodman experienced difficulty at the time, touring with bands (varying in size from trio or quartet to big band) which included coloured musicians. This was especially true in the southern states and with film companies. In this respect, he broke new ground in American attitudes towards black players (the same could be said of his "rival", Artie Shaw).

Wilson left the Goodman orchestra in 1939 to front his own big band. The line-up included Ben Webster and J.C. Heard, but little more can be said of it - it simply wasn't a success and split within a year. Teddy Wilson was one of the finest keyboard soloists in jazz yet, unlike more extrovert musicians he was also the perfect accompanist to jazz or jazz-based singers. His recordings with Billie Holliday (some featuring Lester Young) are legendary and other sessions with such as Ella Fitzgerald, Mildred Bailey, Sarah Vaughan, and Lena Horne were so successful that they were instrumental (if you will pardon the pun) in furthering the early careers of the singers. He continued working with small groups until he rejoined Benny Goodman for two years from 1944. Later in that decade he taught at the Julliard School in New York.

Both musicians continued working in their later years and the list of soloists who worked in their bands reads like a history of jazz itself: Charlie Christian, Fletcher Henderson, Lionel Hampton, Cootie Williams, Roy Eldridge, Zoot Sims, Buster Bailey, Gene Krupa, George Auld, Bunny Berigan, Johnny Hodges and so on. Reading about this music is all very well but the timeless essence of these performances can only be truly conveyed by listening, so if I may make a suggestion ...

John Cavanagh

AGM

*Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the City of London
Phonograph and Gramophone Society at Pyrford, 4th October 1986*

Chairman: Ted Cunningham

The Minutes of the 1985 AGM had been published in the Hillandale News of December 1985 and were taken as read. Their adoption was proposed by Christopher Proudfoot and seconded by Miles Mallinson. There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report: The Chairman said his first year of office had shown him how much work the Chairman was required to do, and he paid tribute to Christopher Proudfoot for bearing the burden for the precious twelve years, together with all his other duties including that of editing our magazine; and for handing over the Society to him in such good working order. The Chairman also thanked those who had helped him through his first year, notably the President and Dave Roberts.

Reviewing the year's progress the Chairman reported that the Society had acquired a new cassette tape recorder for use at the London meetings, and was in the final stages of acquiring a computer to handle membership records. In fact, the membership records had been computerised for several years past, thanks to our Treasurer's having spare-time access to the computer at his place of work, but this access would cease soon, and it became necessary either to return to the unsatisfactory and expensive methods of the past or to obtain our own equipment.

Concerning publications, the most notable event was the imminent launching of Frank Andrews' book on Edison, details of which would be announced shortly. The Society Booklist, which for so many years had been in the capable hands of Dave Roberts, had now been transferred to those of John Booth. Dave had agreed to continue to distribute the magazine.

A particular pleasure during the first months of office had been to receive an invitation to attend a meeting of the Severn Vale branch, enabling him to meet members of the Society not previously known to him.

The Committee had worked hard on organising a one-day Symposium to be held next April in the Old Palace of Hatfield. Some top-rank speakers had already accepted invitations to address the Society and details would be announced in due course.

Adoption of the Chairman's report was proposed by John Bratley and seconded by Timothy Massey.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer advised that the Society was in good financial shape. There were now two separate balance sheets, the General Account and the Bookshop Account. Study of the General Account showed that income from subscriptions is almost balanced by outgoings on the magazine, leaving nothing to spare for other outgoings. This, coupled with next year's rises in printing and postage costs, made it necessary for him to recommend that the membership subscription should be increased to £6.00 for the United Kingdom, £7.00 for Europe, and £9.00 for

the U.S.A. and Australia. The Australian subscription should strictly be £11.00 taking postage into account, but he thought it unreasonable to raise it from £7.50 to £11.00 in one move. Adoption of the Treasurer's recommendation regarding subscriptions was proposed by Dave Roberts, seconded by Bill Violen, and carried.

Royalties from the Phonoparts spares service were similar to those of last year but were expected to decline during the coming year since spares sold to Society Members were now a small proportion of Phonoparts sales.

The Society had spent £280 on the machining of parts which will eventually be assembled into approximately fifteen tinfoil machines which the late Goodwin Ive had intended to market within the Society. These finished machines will be offered for sale to members during the coming year.

The Treasurer detailed some of the many benefits which the computer will confer on the Society, apart from the major one of enabling its business to proceed more smoothly. It would have the capacity to allow expansion for tomorrow's needs, perhaps for the booklist or whatever other activities the Society might undertake in the future. The purchase followed research undertaken by Tom Stephenson and member Mike Lambert, and their recommendation that we should wait a year in order to obtain this equipment at the remarkably good price of £1,300 including all the programmes. Replying to questions from the floor the Treasurer said that membership currently numbered approximately ten years. The questioner offered the conclusion that the equipment was thus costing each member only 17p per annum.

Acceptance of the Treasurer's report was proposed by Roger Thorne and seconded by Phil Bennett.

The Booklist Accounts were presented by John Booth: their acceptance was proposed by Frank Andrews and seconded by Phil Bennett.

Election of Officers and Committee: the officers had agreed to stand again for election, and there being no other nominations they were voted in nem. con.

Chairman: Ted Cunningham
Vice-Chairman: Peter Martland
Treasurer: Mike Field

The Chairman thanked Suzanne Lewis for her work as Hon. Secretary for the past two years. She was now retiring from the post only because it was felt that the Secretary should appear regularly at London Meetings, and this was difficult for her. The Chairman said he was pleased that Suzanne was eager to continue serving the Society and would be standing for election to the Committee. Ken Loughland had taken on the duties of Meetings Secretary during the past year. He had now agreed to accept nomination as Hon. Secretary and to retain the duties of Meetings Secretary. He was proposed for these two offices by Frank Andrews, seconded by Colin Johnson, and elected.

All outgoing Committee Members now stood for re-election, namely Frank Andrews, Christopher Proudfoot, Tom Stephenson and Len Watts: in addition Suzanne Lewis was ready to serve. A Committee of these five was proposed by Dave Roberts, seconded by Michael Hegarty and elected.

Election of Auditor: Mrs Legge was proposed for re-election as the Society's Auditor by Frank Andrews, seconded by Timothy Massey, and elected.

Programmes for London Meetings: The Meetings Secretary reported that, in addition to our regular speakers he looked forward to a programme of jazz on cylinders by Steve Jellyman, and talks by Norman McCann, curator of the National Musical Museum at Brentford; Michael Kinnear, an authority on the Indian gramophone industry, and Timothy Day of the National Sound Archive. He also hoped for another visit from Chris Hamilton.

Any Other Business: A member asked if the advertisement leaflet which accompanies the magazine could be extended to include a free column listing wants of spares, records etc. John Booth replied that since revenue from advertisements showed an operating profit it might be possible to consider a free, or reduced-rate, swap column for members only. It would be for the Committee to decide on this. A limiting factor might be the absolute need to restrict the amount of paper enclosed within the magazine and avoid incurring higher postal charges.

In reply to a question from Howard Hope, the Chairman stated that a new leaflet for distribution to prospective members was in preparation, and he urged all members who were in a position to recruit newcomers to apply to him for supplies.

Phil Bennett complained that regional news had not appeared in recent issues of the magazine. Mike Field said that he had found it difficult to continue his series of regional articles, partly because the material was getting repetitive, partly because of the difficulty of extracting information from the regional branches, but mainly because his increasingly frequent absences from the country meant that he had no time in which to attend to them. They sympathised with Mike, who was actually giving more of his time to the Society than we had the right to expect. He would, nonetheless, like to see solved the problem of reporting regional news, and would welcome offers of help from any member prepared to undertake this on a regular basis.

The President proposed that a Vice-Presidency be offered to Dave Roberts in recognition of his remarkable contribution to the Society's welfare in so many different capacities over the years, especially in connection with the Booklist and its major contribution to Society funds. The proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chairman and carried by acclamation.

The Chairman thanked the Chilterns Branch for accommodating the Annual General Meeting within its Phonofair, and closed the Meeting.

LONDON MEETINGS 1987:

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| <i>JANUARY 20th</i> | <i>Timothy Day, Curator, Western Art Music at the National Sound Archive, will talk about the Archive and its work.</i> |
| <i>FEBRUARY 17th</i> | <i>Merle Gardner will talk on music broadcasting, under the title "Into Thin Air".</i> |
| <i>MARCH 17th</i> | <i>Chris Hamilton will continue his theme of the gramophone and record industry in Scotland: "The Scottish Connection II".</i> |

NINON VALLIN

Ninon Vallin's recordings used to turn up periodically amidst the piles of 78s which all collectors sift through at one time and another, and when found they proved a most rewarding experience. Unfortunately I, for one, don't seem to find such records these days.

This great soprano was one of the major French singers of her era and her name will always be linked with first performances of works by French composers; Reynaldo Hahn comes immediately to mind in this respect. Born on September 9th., 1886, she studied at the Lyons Conservatoire with her brother-in-law, M. Mathieu and later with a great French opera singer of an earlier age, Mme. Heglon. In 1911, shortly after her Paris debut at the Concerts Colonne, Vallin sang in the premiere of Debussy's 'Le Martyre de Saint Sebastien'. After that performance she worked extensively with Debussy. In fact Ninon became his favourite singer and she gave joint recitals with him including the first performance of his 'Trois Poemes de Stephane Mallarme' in March 1914.

Ninon Vallin's operatic career flourished alongside her role as a concert artist and in both fields she enjoyed a long reign. Her debut in opera was as Micaela in a 1912 Opera Comique production of 'Carmen' and she retained the vocal qualities, evident at that time, until the end of her life. This came, sadly, on November 22nd. 1961.

As for her recordings, she began in 1913 with the Gramophone Company, then switched to Pathé where she recorded some hill-and-dales with Leon Beyle. If my memory serves me, she also recorded for Edison but collectors are more likely to find discs by Vallin on Odeon or Columbia. If they do, they will be richly rewarded by the excellence of Ninon Vallin's art.

John Cavanagh

Colchester, Essex, September 16 1986

Dear Christopher,

We are most fortunate in having a hobby that unites Art with Science, but must surely guard against making a false god of either.

Let's bury the hatchet on the matter of loudspeaker leads and transient loads on the National Grid and leave all that emotive talk for the consumer-oriented popular press.

During my apprenticeship I made a laboratory standard amplifier which I sold for £8 because it did not sound well, conversely a pirate copy of the sound-rack of a local cinema with PX4 finals and no neg. feedback whatever, is still in use by a pro jazzman twenty years later!

My wife, being by no means a professional musician, prefers her organ playing via a 1960 TR 52 and S.T.C. mic to a modern 'local grade' of cassette machine and electronic mic., even though paper results put the new portable several steps ahead.

A live recording on my L2B was considered inferior to a dubbing of the same type on the old 2300 lathe, reproduced via a Lenco lightweight turntable and a 16mm. Debrie amplifier. How many of us really know that what we hear when we play an acoustic record (unless a virgin copy) is an accurate reproduction, with due respect to the medium, of the original work?

I have found results differ whether swan-neck or goose-neck tone-arms are used, no doubt the groove has been deformed by the tracking, or lack of it, of the previous machine used and one must experiment with a selection of tone-arms to find the optimum.

As for sharp corners of Columbia Plano-reflex tone-arms restricting the easy flow of sound-waves, so what, it looks (oops) sounds to me more like controlled damping stopping the diaphragm from going wild on loud notes. Compare the sound of a Model A Gem with my compromise Amberola (i.e. a Diamond Standard motor (?? - sic, Ed.) mounted on an HMV 157 horn and this need for the air-column for the diaphragm to work against is apparent.

We have both listened to my Edison Bell Discaphone for the 'stereo stage' mentioned by Ivor Abelson and agree that the 'harness bells' of a Columbia musical ride are displaced from centre in the same way, but then I play electrical band recordings on a Decca bowl-in-lid machine with an American Exhibition soundbox.

Anything goes in this house, so long as it does not frighten the horses, but I would not like a world war to break out over the relative merits of No. 4 and No. 5 soundboxes. I remember a rude old lad called Judge Dread about eleven years ago doing a George Formby type number entitled 'It's all in the Mind' - 'nuff said.

John R. Gomer

While on the subject of those everlasting disputes, the old fibre versus steel needle re-appeared in my correspondence recently with an enquiry from a lady who recalled that in the 1930s, steel needles taken to Africa tended to rust rather quickly in their tins, and so bamboo or wooden ones were put on the market as a substitute. In fact, of course, fibre needles existed long before then, and for other reasons, but their non-rusting quality was an advantage I had never seen mentioned before. And what about all those mint steel needles in mint boxes that have been coming out of South Africa in recent years?

Ed.

P.S. Whatever is a TR52? a rocket? a sportscar? and L2B? a schoolroom, perhaps?



Martinelli in Vesti la Giubba 1926



Frances Alda in The Star Spangled Banner



George Frow at Pyrford (1986)